

**DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 25, 2005**

Members Present: Thompson, Carroll, Harden, Kitson, Lardizzone, Magner, Morris, Spitzfaden and Webb

Members Excused: Ennis, Newstadt, Phillips, Timberman, and Wasson

Staff Present: Davila

Guests: Bill Holloway (BHH Architects), Al Carter (SOS), MAJ John Fisher (249th Engineers, DEARNG & Commandant, OCS Program), Jim Burke (Veterans Day 5K Run/Walk Fundraiser), Richard Citron (VAMC Director), James Testerman (DNGROA), Jack Houck (DEL VETS), Gene Rose and Dave Gillan (KWVA), Ed Moczulski (LP Lo-DEL), Dave White (DE DOL), Lt. Col Dave Deputy (Community Manager Air National Guard), Earl Ferguson (VVA), George Hastings (MOWW), Bob Furman (DAS/DFM), and Garry Greenstein (JWV)

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to our Nations Flag.

Vice-Chairman Thompson reported that during new business there will be an election for a new Vice-Chairman.

Mr. Holloway reported he had some schematics on the interior concepts of the building and wanted to stress that the sketches were just a scope of work for the design builder and not details that are set in stone. The Steering Committee agreed that although carpet gave a more residential atmosphere, it created some maintenance issues and they could achieve a softer feeling in a harder surface which would be easier to maintain. It was discussed that carpet could be put in a resident's room as long as it was in keeping with infectious control policies. Doors on inner patient rooms will be glass with some type of curtains or shades.

Major Fisher spoke at length about his experiences in Iraq. He stated the media inaccurately reported what was really happening and about having personally seen weapons of mass destruction and incidences of when nerve agents were used on American troops. Fisher commented that the folks at the VAMC in Wilmington were really wonderful with the returning Air National Guard Troops.

Mr. Davila reported that the Committee has put together a job description for the Veterans Home Administrator and that the Secretary of State is now responsible for advertising that position.

Mr. Burke presented the idea of a Veterans Day 5K Run/Walk fundraiser for State Veterans Organizations and discussed key points for the event.

Mr. Testerman stated that he would like to see some type of State tax deduction for military pay. Mr. Hastings reported that Mr. Ciccariella is working on this matter and has found that there are individuals in the Senate and House who are receptive to sponsoring State income tax legislation.

Commissioner Morris reported that Senator McBride is willing to introduce or support legislation in the area of the three items that commissioner Morris submitted at the last meeting.

Mr. White discussed issues and laws concerning re-employment of deactivated veterans.

Mr. Furman gave an update on the RFP progress to date. The City of Milford has recommended the rezoning of the park to protect the development of the office park and will go to the Milford City Council for final approval at the end of February. The RFP for the Home has been released; proposals are due February 14, 2005. They expect to interview selected firms on February 25, 2005, and award the contract shortly thereafter. In order for the State of Delaware to award the contract and begin work, we need to receive the Veterans Administration grant (federal) portion of the funding. The funding calculation is based on the amount of money that is available for the Home through State funds, which includes donated monies. Monies that come in after the federal grant is awarded, will not be matched.

Commissioner Carol stated that in the December minutes, under DAS Veterans Home Update; that it should read the project is on time and on budget, even though the original space has grown to 100,000 sqft.

MOTION BY LARDIZZONE TO ACCEPT DECEMBER COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES AS CORRECTED, SECONDED BY HARDEN, MOTION CARRIED.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Mr. Rose spoke about issues concerning the New Castle County Cemetery.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Commissioner Carroll reported that some of the Commissioners have been attending the Wednesday Veterans Home Steering Committee meetings. Members of the Commission have been receiving the minutes from those meetings. The Committee formed by the Commission to name the entire site, decided to call the site The Milford Heritage Commons. The name gives credit to Milford - for providing the property; Heritage - for what is involved, and Commons - being open for everyone. Several other street names and their origins were mentioned. The process of naming the rest of the site roads, streets, etc., is an ongoing project. Mr. Holloway discussed various aspects of the main road leading to the Home.

MOTION BY CARROLL TO ACCEPT "THE MILFORD HERITAGE COMMONS" AS THE NAME CHOSEN FOR THE VETERANS HOME COMPLEX SITE, SECONDED BY LARDIZZONE, MOTION CARRIED.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

Commissioner Lardizzone reported that he spoke with Senators Vaughn and Cook about some of the issues that Commissioner Morris brought up at the December Commission meeting. He is still working on retired military tax exemptions and military pension for State employees.

PERSONNEL

Commissioner Lardizzone reported that the Sussex County Cemetery is now fully staffed.

GROUNDBREAKING & DEDICATION

Commissioner Morris reported that they are still working on the groundbreaking and the entrenching tools. They are now looking at a June timeframe for the ceremony.

MONUMENTS & MEMORIALS

Commissioner Kitson reported he is still working on the monuments list.

Mr. Davila reported that he is working on the WWII memorial planned for Dover. He has to report site details and total construction costs to the Legislature by May 1, 2005. Discussed aspects of the proposed monument.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS

Harden (WAVES Nat'l) – The organization will be participating in the Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week; she is the Assistant Chairperson of the VAVS Committee. The American Legion will serve lunch to patients in the nursing home on Monday; WAVES will play BINGO on Wednesday afternoon, and the Philly Fanatic will be there at 1:00 pm.

Kitson (VFW) - Department of Delaware had their Red, White & Blue Gala on January 22, 2005. Only 71 of 200 showed due to the snow storm. They still raised \$45,000 for Operation Uplink and beat last year's total. Kitson is still collecting money from anyone who still wants to donate.

Thompson (MCL) – We are having our Department meeting the last Saturday of January.

Lardizzone (DAV) – Reese Phillips is in the VA Hospital and sure would like to have Commissioners come up and see him; he is in Rm 4010.

Morris (American Legion) – The National Commander will be visiting Delaware on March 11, 2005. We have plans to try and have the National Commander meet with the Governor. The American Legion is still assisting the veteran who had fuel problems. A folded flag is given to one member of the family of a deceased veteran. Our Chaplin has a program selling pins of the folded flag memorial for people to give out to the other family members.

Carroll (MOPH) – Our National organization is undergoing a lot of changes. The new staff of elected officers has come in and there have been a number of changes made in our Springfield office. The Veterans Home Fund, New Castle Chapter, is planning to donate \$2,000 at their meeting this Thursday evening and the Chapter in Sussex has said they will donate another \$1,000. The total Veterans Home fund as of today is \$100,511.49.

Magner (AMVETS) – This time last year, we had only one major post in the State of Delaware. We now have six posts, with the possibility of a seventh coming on board in Bear, Delaware. One of the ongoing projects with AMVETS is the phone cards. We are dealing directly with the Family Assistance office at Fort Mead; they are in dyer need of assistance. Mr. Gillan reported that Post 100 had a program on Christmas Eve; they put on a show, had refreshments, and gave out small gifts. AMVETS of Delaware will be participating in VA Hospital carnival.

Greenstein (JWV) – (filling in for Newstadt) – This past month, Commander Myron Gold passed away unexpectedly and the Senior Vice is in Florida.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Commissioner Morris asked Mr. Davila to report on the American Legion project from the December meeting. He reported that a letter had been forwarded to Comcast in reference to the Pentagon channel. The letter informed them that it is a free access channel if they so desire to broadcast it. Commissioner Morris commented that he thinks the Commission, in part or whole, should meet with the two legislative Veterans Affairs Committees at least once a year to discuss common issues and goals. He would like to propose that a meeting be set up before the legislative bodies become bogged down.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Davila reported that the Women Veterans Symposium will be held on April 30, 2005 at the Buena Vista Conference Center in New Castle, from 8:30 to 3:00. Mr. Davila also reported that he attended one of the Presidential Balls in Washington, The Salute to Heroes, better known as the American Legion Ball, and had the opportunity to say good-bye to Secretary Principi.

Commissioner Kitson questioned the election on voting for a Vice Chairman, stating there was nothing in the By-laws that stated the Vice Chairman automatically becomes Chairman, when the issue is other than a death. Elections are postponed until next meeting. Vice Chairman Thompson will request a decision from the Attorney General's Office.

Mr. Hastings reported that since the last meeting his appointment to the Commission has expired. He really enjoyed serving on the Commission and is very pleased and proud to have served as Chairman for a short time. As a civilian, he intends to make sure that the Veterans Home is under the Veterans Commission.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: FEBRUARY 22, 2005 (11:00 AM)

**LOCATION: Robbins Bldg, 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100
Dover, DE**

ADJOURNED